agricultural SITUATION

the crop reporters magazine

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FIBER FUTURE

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Cotton and wool, so long the top fibers in U.S. textiles, have seen their leadership position usurped by manmade synthetics, developed only a few decades ago. We've been wondering, and we're probably not alone, what the future is likely to bring. Why have consumers switched their allegiance? Will the use of synthetics keep soaring at further expense to natural fibers? What impact is the changing fiber usage having on U.S. cotton and wool producers—and on their incomes?

Recently we interviewed three USDA experts on what they foresee in the fiber field. James Donald specializes in analyzing trends for cotton for the Economic Research Service. He is also the editor of the ERS periodical *Cotton Situation.* Larry Clayton is an ERS economist concerned with wool and is the editor of the ERS *Wool Situation.* Margaret Weidenhamer is chief of the Statistical Reporting Service's Special Surveys Branch. Her job is to survey consumer attitudes towards farm products such as wool and cotton.

DONALD ON COTTON

Editor: Mr. Donald, can you give us an idea of how much cotton was produced in the United States last year?

Donald: Well, the 1969 crop was about 10 million bales—down nearly a million from the year before. But 1969 was one of the worst years in history for growing cotton: the weather was bad and insect damage was severe. As a result, the average yield per acre fell to 433 pounds—way below a bale per acre. That's the lowest yield we've had in over 10 years.

Editor: Was production still large enough to meet consumer needs?

Donald: Not quite. We had to cut into our carryover stocks by about a half a million bales or so. But we still carried over into 1970/71 about 6 million bales of cotton which should be adequate until the 1970 crop begins to come into supply this fall.

Editor: You talk about cutting into the carryover. Isn't this a pretty good idea?

Donald: It depends generally on the size of our inventory. The cotton carryover nowadays isn't so big that it needs much cutting into. We need enough cotton at the end of the crop year to meet domestic use and export requirements until the new crop moves to market. We also need ample stocks to be sure there are sufficient quantities and qualities of the various cottons.

So, our 6-million bale carryover into 1970/71 is certainly not excessively large. In fact, some cotton industry spokesmen worry it might be too little. After the very small 1969 crop, they are wondering if we ought to carry over more cotton in case something happens to wipe out a large portion of the crop.

Editor: Do you have an idea at this point how big the 1970 crop is going to be?

Donald: I'd say production should be up substantially from 1969. Because of the 1969/70 season's shortfall, the Government increased the 1970 acreage allotment. Farmers have upped their plantings and with more normal growing conditions yields should bounce back. We could have a crop that's a fifth larger than the 1969 total.

Editor: Mr. Donald, what about cotton and its declining use as far as U.S. consumers are concerned? It seems like we've been shying away from using natural fibers in many of our fabrics, haven't we?

Donald: Yes, and it's not just U.S. consumers. Manmade fibers have moved into many of the traditional outlets for cotton both here and abroad—and the inroads have been particularly big in recent years.

Part of this, of course, is the trend to blended fabrics, with their "easy care" characteristics that consumers apparently find desirable. The U.S. housewife, for example, seems to like the qualities of a shirt which can be washed, dried, and then worn without ironing.

Editor: In other words, consumer preferences and technological advances play tremendously important roles in cotton consumption.

Donald: Yes, they certainly do and the cotton industry is well aware of this. To help counteract this trend to the use of synthetic fibers, the cotton industry has a cotton Research and Promotion Program now under the auspices of the Cotton Producers' Institute. Under this program, cotton growers are contributing a dollar for each bale of cotton they produce and this money is used for research and promotion on behalf of cotton. One of the biggest research goals now is to come up with an all-cotton easy-care fabric.

Editor: Mr. Donald, what share of the total textile market now is cotton and what share is synthetics?

Donald: The synthetic fibers currently can claim more than half the market. Cotton has about 40 percent—and, of course, the rest of the market is divided between wool and very small amounts of silk and flax.

Editor: Why are synthetics doing so well?

Donald: Synthetics have moved into the market usually on the basis of individual strong points: some of the fibers are especially strong; some are highly durable; some have a price advantage. But really, no single synthetic fiber possesses the all-around versatility of cotton at this point.

And I guess you'd also have to say that the massive amounts of money synthetic textile manufacturers have spent on promotion and research has also played a part in these fibers' success. Private sources put the total close to $250 million last year.

Editor: Mr. Donald, what has the declining demand for cotton done to producers' incomes?

Donald: Well, to meet the competition from manmade fibers Congress enacted a new type program for cotton in 1965. Loan prices were lowered to meet this competition and also to help us sell more cotton abroad.

Currently, the cotton loan price is around 20¼ cents per pound, compared with around 30 cents back in 1964 or 1965. U.S. mills and exporters buy cotton at this lower level. However, U.S. producers haven't felt the full impact of the lower price because under the program their incomes are supplemented by direct payments from the Government.

So while prices are much lower than several years back, producer incomes have been maintained by direct Government assistance.

CLAYTON ON WOOL

Editor: Mr. Clayton, wool production in the United States has been going down for the past how many years?

Clayton: Well, the most recent high we had in wool production was in 1960. Sheep numbers and production have declined ever since. Producers have been selling off their flocks for a number of reasons. Labor is one factor—good labor is not only difficult to acquire but it's a major expense item in sheep production.

Competition from other farm enterprises also is important. Most of our sheep—about three-fourths of the total—are in the West. In that area beef cattle are a major competitor with sheep—and recently producers have chosen beef production over sheep and wool.

Editor: Mr. Clayton, Jim Donald pointed out that with cotton there's a 6-million bale carryover. What about carryover supplies, or just supplies, of wool? Is there sufficient wool production to meet our consumer demand?

Clayton: No, our output falls substantially below our mill requirements and for most of this century we've imported considerable quantities of wool to meet domestic requirements.

Editor: In other words, there's opportunity for greater wool production here in the States.

Clayton: The wool we produce in this country is primarily for use in apparel; very little, if any, is carpet-type. So in the foreseeable future we'll have to import practically all wool that's used in carpets—and probably a good part of the apparel wool, too. Thus, while there might be justification for upping production from the standpoint of consumption, economically it's just not something producers have been able to do.

Editor: Mr. Clayton, what about wool and synthetic fibers? Have the manmades been hurting wool use?

Clayton: Well, we've been losing a bit on per capita wool use. For apparel purposes, the total per person came to 1.6 pounds last year—about three-tenths of a pound less than the 1959–68 average. However, gains in population have tended to hold total volume of wool used fairly stable.

Editor: Are the wool people trying to come up with any innovations to meet the competition from synthetics?

Clayton: Yes, indeed. There's been a lot of work done—both in research and promotion.

To cite only a couple of the research developments we hope will make consumers happier with their wool products: there are now washable and permanently pressed wools for apparel use; and researchers have come up with new dye properties for woolen carpets.

Editor: Mr. Clayton, can you give us a brief summary of the price situation for wool producers?

Clayton: Let me start by going back to something I mentioned earlier. Because we import substantial quantities of raw wool from other countries, essentially world supply/demand conditions determine U.S. price trends.

This has resulted in wide price fluctuations. In the early 1960's, for example, prices of U.S. shorn wool averaged 42–43 cents a pound, rose to around 50 cents by the middle of the decade, then fell to a level of about 40–42 cents in the last 3 years.

I might mention at this point, however, that the price U.S. producers receive for wool, as it affects their income, is aided by direct payments under provisions of the National Wool Act. This legislation authorizes direct payments to producers to make up any difference in the average market price and a predetermined incentive price. The incentive prices have increased from 62 cents in 1965 to 72 cents this year.

In other words, while market prices do affect income, direct payments help smooth out any major changes from one year to the next.

WEIDENHAMER ON CONSUMER ATTITUDES

Editor: Miss Weidenhamer, what we've heard from Jim Donald and Larry Clayton seems to indicate that cotton and wool aren't the consumer favorites they used to be. Do your surveys of consumers across the country bear this out?

Weidenhamer: While consumers still speak highly of cotton and wool in our interviews, there's no doubt they're interested in the advantages offered by blended fabrics (mixes of manmades and natural fibers) and by pure synthetics. Consumer purchases in recent years definitely attest to some change in their preferences for the various fibers.

Editor: Can you spell for us some of these changes?

Weidenhamer: Looking back over the surveys we've conducted during the past 20 years, consumers have always tended to emphasize ease of care. But before drip dry, permanent press textiles came on the market, easy-care meant easy to iron and qualities like that. Now, with all the new products and processes that have been developed, the consumer has set his or her sights a little higher.

Actually, I think modern-day consumers may place less emphasis on the actual fiber content of what they buy but they do pay more attention to the care characteristics—how the item must be cleaned, whether it needs ironing, and so forth. Ironing seems to be a critical consideration with many consumers today.

Editor: Would you say the need for ironing is the big reason for the fall-off in consumer preference for the natural fibers?

Weidenhamer: The need for ironing is one of the most common disadvantages attributed to cotton by consumers we've had contact with. Some of them also fault cotton for wrinkling, in certain instances. But for most textile items made of wool, laundering and ironing aren't as important with consumers. I'd say the chief faults consumers attribute to wool are that it sometimes causes allergies and it cannot be cared for as easily at home.

Editor: Miss Weidenhamer, you've mentioned some of the drawbacks consumers say cotton and wool have. What are some of the good points these fibers have in the eyes of consumers?

Weidenhamer: Consumers generally give cotton credit for being cool, comfortable, and durable. And they do grant it some easy-care characteristics—for example, most believe cotton is machine washable. Other plus factors: consumers say it comes in a vast array of pretty colors and patterns; it has an excellent appearance; and it's versatile—cotton clothing can be worn for several seasons of the year.

I believe a current study would find wool still has an excellent image with consumers, except for the allergy irritation problem I mentioned before.

Editor: Miss Weidenhamer, would you switch over and discuss consumer attitudes towards manmade fibers?

Weidenhamer: As you know, manmade fibers differ considerably, just as cotton and wool have different characteristics. Some of the manmades rate very high with consumers because of ease of care and wrinkle resistance. Others, especially rayon and nylon, have a less favorable reputation. Rayon, in particular, is faulted for fraying, snagging or pulling at the seams, being harder to wash and iron, clinging to the body, and losing its shape.

Editor: Do you think cotton and wool will be able to make a comeback with consumers?

Weidenhamer: I don't think you can actually say cotton and wool ever lost out with consumers. Really, the changing preference we've noted seem not so much an objection to the natural fibers as a desire for the extra advantages consumers believe they will get from the synthetics. And every new development in the textile field will cause some shift in consumer attitudes.

To give our readers a clearer picture of U.S. farming in all its modern diversity, Agricultural Situation presents the fifth in a series of farm photo-essays. These farms have been selected by USDA farm management specialists as typical of good commercial farm businesses in various production areas.

They are *not* average farms . . . they are definitely above average. But they are not showplaces either. They represent the modern farm businesses that can be readily found in their production areas, and which produce the bulk of U.S. farm products today.

PORTRAIT OF A FARM

Waveland Farm, operated by George Robinson, is in the heart of Kentucky's famed Bluegrass country. It sits amid the limestone hills south of the Ohio River, just west of the Appalachian Mountains. Rainfall is plentiful—44 inches a year—and the winters are mild.

Originally, Waveland Farm's 500 acres were covered with hardwood forest. Today, most of the land is pasture, and tobacco is the main cash crop—typical in the area.

Waveland Farm sells about 100,000 pounds of tobacco a year, 4,000 bushels of corn, and some 6,000 pounds of grass seed. The livestock operation on the farm turns out about 150 Angus steers, 240–260 lambs, and 160–200 feeder pigs.

The farm's gross sales total more than $90,000 per year; four full-time tenants are employed.

Tobacco is a labor-intensive crop. At housing time, the stalks of tobacco are impaled on stakes, and hung in the curing barn until ready for market. Everybody on the farm pitches in to help with the harvest, and Robinson hires an extra 10 or 12 workers to help for the 3 weeks it takes to get it all in the barns. Two-thirds of the tobacco acreage is irrigated from a small lake to increase yields and protect against dry spells.

Mechanization has made scant progress in tobacco growing, and the crop absorbs an average of nearly 500 man-hours per acre. Yields average about 3,300 pounds per acre.

Robinson, a graduate of the University of Kentucky, manages his farm to take full advantage of the 30-acre tobacco allotment. The cattle, sheep, and hogs utilize the pasture and farm-grown grain.

Farm equipment includes six tractors of various sizes, a two-row tobacco setter, combine, corn picker, forage harvester, baler, grinder-mix mill, and cultivating tools.

Robinson buys about 150 steers each fall, feeds them on corn silage and hay during the winter, and puts them on Bluegrass pasture for the summer. The steers are bought at 350–400 pounds, sold at over 800 the following September—for an average gain of more than a pound a day.

Waveland also has about 200 breeding ewes on its rougher pastureland. They produce about 240–260 lambs per year, along with their wool. A dozen sows are also kept to use some of the corn grown on the farm. They farrow twice a year and Robinson sells 160–200 feeder pigs weighing 60–80 pounds.

Waveland also produces 120–125 tons of hay which consists of about 25 tons pure alfalfa, 25 tons pure red clover, and 75 tons red clover, orchard grass and bluegrass mix.

HIGH PLAINS WATER: AN EBBING ASSET

Before man walked the earth, nature had set aside an abundant reservoir of irrigation water below the surface of the Texas High Plains.

In the past 30 years, the supply has been depleted to the extent that agricultural economists expect irrigation to become unprofitable in most local areas by the year 2000.

The subsequent impact on the region's farming will be extensive, according to a study conducted jointly by USDA's Economic Research Service and the Texas Agricultural Experiment Station.

Now the Texas High Plains water irrigates a flourishing cotton crop and feed grains for the Nation's fastest growing cattle feeding industry. But the water table recedes deeper under the Plains every year. When the water gets so deep that pumping becomes unprofitable, high value irrigated crops will give way and farm incomes will wither.

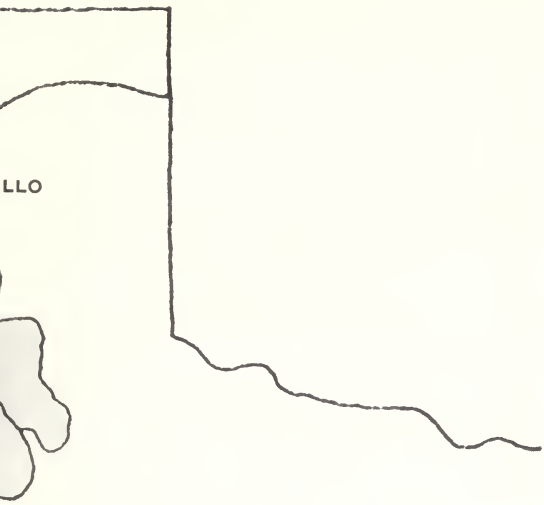
Researchers investigated water levels in 21 Texas Panhandle counties south of the Canadian River. Most of the 7 million acres studied lay north of Lubbock. From their investigation, they projected irrigated acreage and crop trends for 1966 to 2015.

Irrigated acreage is expected to decline from 1966's 3.5 million acres to 125,000 in 2015. The volume of water pumped will trickle off from 4.13 million acre-feet to 95,000 during the same time.

The projected declines are not equally spaced over the period or over the area. About 69 percent of the decline in irrigated acreage and 74 percent of the pumping decline will occur by 1990.

A northern sector of the study area, almost 1.5 million acres roughly between Tulia, Tex., and the Canadian River, will probably go out of irrigation earlier, about the year 2000. Another area of about 1.8 million acres will virtually phase out of irrigation by 2015.

A third area, over 1.1 million acres, which is shaped like a very rough half



Once used, the ground water in the Texas High Plains is gone forever. If the present rate of depletion continues, irrigation will almost cease in the northern area of the region by 2015 A.D. Based on estimates of recent irrigated acreage, land irrigated in the central section will decline around 85 percent and in the southern section 95 percent by 2015.

moon north of Lubbock, will contain about two-thirds of the High Plains irrigated area by 2015.

As irrigated acres disappear, so will the production of sorghum and cotton, the most profitable crops in the area.

Because of support prices, cotton pays the High Plains farmer best. But because of acreage allotments on cotton, farmers also grow grain sorghum.

In the future, the High Plains farmer will probably cut back on sorghum to save water for cotton.

Even at that, cotton production in the area is projected to fall from 1966's almost 1 million bales—about a tenth of the Nation's cotton crop—to 355,000 in 2015, with around half the decline occurring by 1990.

Grain sorghum production has a projected fall of 91 percent by 2015, with a 75 percent decrease in the next 20 years.

Farmers will switch to nonirrigated crops. Dryland wheat production for 2015 is projected at 35.6 million bushels, 22 percent above 1966.

At 1966 commodity prices, net farm returns in the study area will probably decline from 1966's $194 million to $60.6 million by 2015. Projected declines are steepest in the early years, with net returns diminishing 48 percent by 1985.

During the next 15 years, difficult problems face the farmers in the Plains. There is just so much ground water, and when it's gone or too deep to pump profitably, 18 inches of rainfall, the area average, is all the water crops are likely to get.

Expanding farm size and reverting to dryland winter wheat seems the best choice open to High Plains farmers. Current land prices, interest rates, and the scarcity of farm labor are now the chief roadblocks to enlarging farms. However, current land values probably will be one of the early casualties in the process of adjusting to declining water supplies.

SPOTLIGHT ON NORTH DAKOTA

Wheat is king in North Dakota. At last count, nine out of 10 Flickertail State farmers reported they grew some wheat; three out of 10 planted at least two different kinds.

John Price, Statistician in Charge of USDA's Crop and Livestock Reporting Service in Fargo, filled us in on some recent highlights of North Dakota farming.

Durum is the wheat that often comes to mind when North Dakota is mentioned—because traditionally the State grows between 80 and 90 percent of the Nation's crop each year.

Durum is the specialty wheat that goes into pasta products, in particular, macaroni and spaghetti. Growing demand for these foods in the United States has meant a big increase in durum use—and in North Dakota production.

In 1969, the State grew 91.8 million bushels of durum, compared with 26.9 million in 1960. As production more than tripled during the period, acreage just about doubled.

Durum was planted on 41 percent of the State's wheat acreage last year, in contrast to 15 percent at the decade's beginning.

Even though Durum is raised on about two-fifths of the Flickertail State farms and was worth some $122 million in 1969, Hard Red Spring wheat in North Dakota is actually more valuable. It's grown on more than three-fourths of North Dakota's farms and its market value was about $150 million last year.

Wheat has long been the major single source of agricultural income in the State, even discounting Government payments. Cattle and calves usually rank second in economic importance among farm products, followed by barley and flaxseed.

North Dakota can't be counted among the Nation's leading livestock States—even though it's a fairly important producer of creamery butter and American cheese.

Over the past two decades there's been a big drop in the number of North Dakota farms raising livestock. Last year, approximately 30,000 farms (70 percent of the total number) had at least one major livestock species on hand, compared with 53,000 farms (80 percent of the total) in 1950.

However, most North Dakota livestock operations have grown in size as they've dwindled in number.

Cattle herds in 1969 averaged about 2½ times as large as in 1950, while swine herds more than doubled in average size. Sheep flocks and milk cow herds had gotten 1½ times bigger. Only for chicken flocks were size gains slight.

Other agricultural endeavors for which North Dakota is noted are production of barley, flax, and sunflowerseed. It's the Nation's leading State for each of these crops, with roughly a fourth of the barley output and more than half the flax and sunflowerseed.

North Dakota's flax crop was worth about $50 million to farmers in 1969. In addition, about 50,000 tons of flax straw (used in making cigarette paper) are sold annually with a value ranging around $700,000.

Sunflowerseed production is concentrated in North Dakota's Red River Valley, which grows both oil varieties for use in cooking and nonoil varieties for use in bird seed and confections.

The sunflower crop isn't one of the State's most important, economically, but it has gained ground. Output totaled 97 million pounds last year, compared with 29 million in 1963 (when the first estimates were made).

North Dakota's economy is based on agriculture and wheat is the State's most valuable farm crop.

outlook

Digested from outlook reports of the Economic Research Service.
Forecasts based on information available through... July 1, 1970

SOYBEAN CARRYOVER SLIPS . . . Unprecedented soybean demand continued through spring, whittling the prospective carryover this fall below earlier expectations. Carryover September 1 now looks to be around 240 million bushels, compared with 324 million last season.

●

SOYBEAN CRUSHINGS this marketing year are running a fifth ahead of 1968–69 rates, reflecting strong demand for oil and meal and favorable processing margins.

●

EXPORTS OF SOYBEANS were up about two-fifths through June, heading for a season's record total or around 415 million bushels. Compare that with 287 million last year. The bigger demand abroad stems from slightly lower U.S. prices . . . renewed growth in foreign livestock and poultry production . . . smaller world supplies of competitive oils and meals.

●

WHEAT SUPPLIES for 1970–71 may be about the same as last year's 2 billion-plus bushels. The 1970 crop is down some, but the dip should be offset by a buildup in stocks by June 30, 1970.

●

WHEAT PRICE SUPPORT structure undergoes a major change beginning with the 1970 crop . . . but county rates in primary producing areas will be about the same as in 1969. They'll still be based on the national average loan level, but won't include the traditional "backoff" from terminal elevators.

●

NEW WHEAT LOAN STRUCTURE came about because of . . . greatly increased exports . . . frequent as well as big shifts in freight rates . . . more truck and barge movement . . . establishment of multiple car and unit train rates.

FEED GRAIN USE has been running at a record rate for most of 1969–70—which could boost domestic consumption this marketing year somewhat above the high rate of 1968–69. Back of the booming demand: price relationships favor liberal feeding . . . hog feeding appears on the upswing.

●

FEED GRAIN EXPORTS were very large during the first half of the current season, but have dropped off a good bit this spring and summer. Southern Hemisphere competition for feed grain customers is stiffening. The 1969–70 export total may be somewhere near last year's movement of a little over 18 million tons.

●

HOG PRODUCTION PICKUP is underway, following the 6% cutback in 1969's pig crop. Producers had 13% more sows farrow in December 1969–May 1970 and they plan a 17% increase during June–November.

●

HOG PRICES are expected to show little, if any, increase this summer. And there'll be a sharp seasonal price decline this fall . . . with producers getting considerably less than the well-above-average prices they received last October–November.

●

FED CATTLE MARKETINGS this summer are likely to be somewhat larger than a year ago, judging from the number of steers on feed under 900 pounds and heifers under 700 pounds on April 1, 1970.

●

FED CATTLE PRICES probably will strengthen somewhat this summer, if marketings develop as anticipated. The July–September average may top last year's third quarter average of $30.73 (Choice steers at Chicago). Also bolstering prices are . . . seasonally smaller pork output . . . smaller supplies of veal and lamb . . . continued heavy consumer demand for beef.

●

COTTON MILL USE prospects have turned down in recent months . . . now look as if they'll total about 8.1 million bales. Compare that with 1968–69's consumption of 8¼ million. The sluggish domestic demand reflects . . . the general economic situation, which has dampened sales of most textile fiber products . . . reduced military purchases . . . big cotton textile imports . . . continuing strong competition from manmades.

●

MILITARY PURCHASES OF COTTON, off more than 40% during the first two-thirds of this marketing season from year-earlier levels, account for about half of the probable drop in domestic mill use in 1969–70.

MINK PRODUCTION . . . Recently released, USDA's first report ever on mink output in the United States. It estimates last year's pelt production at 5,455,000, the number of mink farms at 2,635. Pastel pelts were the largest single group—making up slightly less than a third of the total. Wisconsin had the most mink ranches, 661.

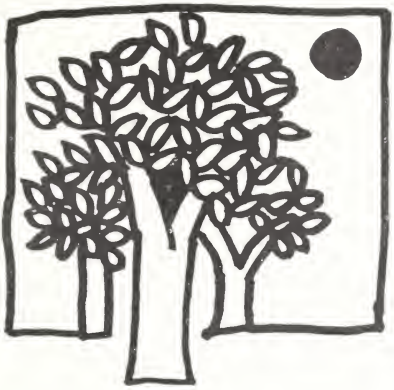
●

MINK REPORT . . . Plans are to publish similar data on mink about this time each year. The National Board of Fur Farm Organizations assisted SRS in compiling a list of mink ranches and in developing the survey questionnaire.

STATISTICAL BAROMETER

Item	1957–59 average	1969	1970—latest data available	
Prices received by farmers	100	114	116	June
Prices paid, interest, taxes, wage rates	100	127	133	June
Parity ratio (1910–14=100)	—	74	72	June
Consumer price index, all items	100	128	135	May
Food	100	126	132	May
Average value of land per acre	100	187	193	March
Total value of farm real estate ($bil.)	—	202.6	208.9	March
Agricultural exports ($bil.)	4.2	5.9	.6	May
Agricultural imports ($bil.)	3.9	5.0	.4	May
Disposable personal income ($bil.)	321.5	629.7	660.4	(2)
Expenditures for food ($bil.)	66.3	103.6	109.0	(2)
Share of income spent for food (percent)	20.6	16.5	16.5	(2)
Farm food market basket: [1]				
Retail cost ($)	983	1,173	1,227	May
Farm value ($)	388	477	485	May
Farmer's share of retail cost (percent)	39	41	40	May
Realized gross farm income ($bil.)	36.5	54.6	55.1	(3)
Production expenses ($bil.)	24.9	38.6	38.9	(3)
Realized net farm income ($bil.)	11.6	16.0	16.2	(3)

[1] Average annual quantities per family and single person household bought by wage and clerical workers 1960–61 based on BLS figures.
[2] Annual rate, seasonally adjusted first quarter 1970.
[3] Annual rate, seasonally adjusted fourth quarter 1969.



LIVESTOCK BUFFER ZONES

See no livestock. Hear no livestock. Smell no livestock.

A good many rural nonfarm dwellers—some of whom moved to the countryside deliberately to escape the manmade sights, sounds, and smells of cites—have discovered the look, sound, and smell of some farming operations can be obnoxious, too. And their objections can cause neighboring farmers plenty of trouble.

In the Northeast, where major conflicts between nonfarmers and farmers have already flared, the nonfarmers' complaints have actually forced some agricultural enterprises—particularly poultry operations—out of business through changes in zoning ordinances.

One way around this growing problem in the Northeast, at least, is to use forestland as a buffer zone between livestock operations and suburban areas. At least that's the suggestion put forth by an Economic Research Service sociologist.

Right now, relatively large segments of northeastern land are used to grow trees for possible use as lumber or in paper products. Woodland owners control over half the land area of some counties that are in the Northeast Region. (The nine Northeast Region States include the six New England States plus New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania.)

Livestock operations in or near Northeast forestlands not only avoid direct confrontations with complaining neighbors but enjoy convenient waste disposal facilities. Such convenience will, in all likelihood, become increasingly important as livestock operations get bigger in the future.

Most of the Northeast forestland is held in relatively large tracts—and even the largest feedlot or poultry operation envisioned for the region would use only a tiny fraction of an individual owner's property. Also, proper disposal of animal waste in the forest is compatible with most forestry uses.

Woodland owners could rent land to existing and new livestock enterprises—or they could go into beef, hog, or dairy production themselves. Or they could even sell pockets of land in or around forests for use by livestock producers. Such forest use could benefit everyone concerned.

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Editor: Geraldine Schumacher

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